Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was relieved to finally be at the Home of Cricket in Mirpur yesterday after more than a year due to his suspension from all forms of cricket. (Bottom) Left-handed batsman Tamim Iqbal, along with a number of national team players, came to the venue for fitness test. Tamim is expected to fly for Pakistan today to take part in the PSL playoffs.

PHOTO: BCB

'Cricketers' fitness satisfactory'

SPORTS REPORTER



All eyes were on Shakib Al Hasan on the first day of the fitness test for the cricketers vesterday as the champion

all-rounder returned to the home of cricket -- the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium -- after 376 days since being banned for one year for not reporting corrupt approaches from a bookie last year.

Players, divided into four groups, underwent the test where the first lot of twenty cricketers were supposed to give fitness test at 10:00am. Shakib reached the stadium at around 8.30am and roamed around the place where he had registered numerous records in the past.

Shakib, however, did not take part in the fitness test. The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) trainer Tushar Kanti Howlader informed that the BCB's physio Julian Calefato wanted to assess the condition of the cricketer before taking the test.

"As Shakib returned after a long rest. He is expected to give the test of going into quarantine after for every cricketer," Akram said. within the next two days," Tushar returning from abroad, even if the Apart from Shakib, the other international cricket resumes in told The Daily Star.

But according to sources, there was another reason behind that. The top-ranked ODI allrounder, who returned a negative the beep test with other players who were yet to undergo their coronavirus tests.

certificate.

When the issue was addressed to the BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan, coronavirus test the other day, the former skipper informed that expressed his discomfort in taking the board has taken all safety measures while conducting the fitness test.

"We have to make sure health



returnee has a Covid-19 negative cricketers did take part in the January hopefully," said Lee.

Shakib found himself under safety of the players and we hot water after he attended instructed everyone to follow inauguration of a super shop in the those. We will take the coronavirus capital last Friday less than twelve tests of all the prayers when we will time, our physio Julian wanted to hours since his return from the US, create the bio-bubble, but before consult with him before taking the contrary to health safety guidelines that we have ensured health safety

mandatory fitness test and a total of seventy cricketers gave the test on the first day.

Eight players, including the likes of Hasanuzzaman (10.10), Irfan Hossain (10.10), Arafat Sunny jnr (10.1), Rubel Mia (10.2), Shubhashish Roy (9.8), Iftekhar Sajjad Rony (10.8), Sohag Gazi (9.4) and Avishek Mitra 10.6 failed the test as they could not achieve the eleven-point benchmark for the beep test.

Nihaduzzaman top-scored with 13.4 while Robiul Islam and Pinak Ghosh scored 13.

According to BCB's head of physical performance Nicholas Lee, majority of the players looked fit and they are heading towards gaining match fitness in the coming days.

"Apart from a handful, all the cricketers looked to be in good shape and in fact, it seems like the players focused on their fitness during the coronavirusinduced lockdown. There are no issues regarding national and high performance players in terms of fitness. I think we are in a transition from physical fitness towards match fitness and I am hopeful we will be able to get that by playing and by the time

Will booters be underdone for Qatar?

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

PAKISTAN V ZIMBABWE

Delhi v Mumbai

Live from 8:00pm

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE FINAL

SPORTS REPORTER



Amid preparations for the FIFA international friendlies against Nepal next week, Bangladesh's nod to Qatar's proposal to

play their World Cup Qualifying match in early December has prompted questions about the wisdom of the move as the away match against much stronger opposition could be very tough due to inadequate preparation.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has agreed to play the World Cup Qualifier against Qatar on December 4 after the 2022 World Cup hosts verbally asked Bangladesh early this month to play the match separate from the schedule of the qualifiers, which were deferred to next year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Nothing has been finalised yet as Qatar is trying to get the final approval from FIFA and AFC to host Bangladesh. The FIFA provision allows member associations to hold the World Cup Qualifying fixture if the pandemic permits and both teams agree to play.

Not even the most optimistic football fan in Bangladesh would expect a win over Asian Champions Qatar but they will certainly hope for another good show against Qatar, similar to what the boys in red and green put up in a 0-2 defeat at home last year.

There were reasons for the good fight as the booters were at the peak of their form just after finishing the 2018-19 seasons and British coach Jamie Day had also gotten enough time to form a good combination, which was further fine-tuned with two international friendlies against Bhutan.

But, this time around, the players have been out of action for seven months before being assembled on September 23 under local coaches for the Nepal friendlies. Jamie has worked for just nine days with the booters and is working hard to get the players' fitness levels back to a satisfactory level ahead of the November 13 and 17 friendlies against Nepal.

On the other hand, Qatar have been far ahead in terms of preparation as they have started their QBN Star League in early September with some 30 matches already being played, while the top two clubs are also gearing up for the final of the Amir

Besides, they have started their U-23 league four weeks ago and the Qatar national team have already played an international friendly against Ghana early

last month and are scheduled to play two FIFA friendlies against Costa Rica and South Korea on November 13 and 17 respectively in Australia.

Third T201

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STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

We are thinking of the Nepal friendlies and not the Qatar match, which has not been confirmed. My focus is to play two friendly matches at home right now. If the Qatar match is given the go-ahead, then we will have good preparation in November," said Jamie. "It will be a tough game because it's an away match. So, if we play [against Qatar], we will prepare as much as we can and we will go with enough training and try to get in more practice matches before the Qatar match.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem



Shohag said they have consulted with Jamie, the technical department and some top clubs before giving their nod to Qatar.

"Our team is ready and have been practising and will play two friendlies against Nepal. So, we have agreed to the Qatar proposal after consulting with head coach Jamie Day, the BFF technical department and four top clubs. Qatar also agreed to arrange a practice match before the tie on December 4," said Shohag, adding Qatar will communicate their final decision within this week.

One of the national players, seeking anonymity, said the condition of the team could be judged after the two friendlies and it would be better to play against Oatar in the latter part of December instead of the first week

Klopp, Guardiola happy with draw

AFP, London

Jurgen Klopp praised his "dangerous" Liverpool team after they missed the chance to return to the top of the Premier League following a 1-1 draw with Manchester City on Sunday.

The Liverpool boss fielded a fearsome-looking starting line-up at the Etihad featuring Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Diogo Jota.

A flying start from the champions was rewarded with Salah's 13th-minute penalty. Gabriel Jesus levelled for Pep Guardiola's men before Kevin De Bruyne failed to hit the target from the spot three minutes before half-time.

A share of the points between the sides that have combined to win the title for the past three seasons leaves Liverpool in third, just a point off the top, while City are five points behind with a game in hand.

"Super football game to be honest," Klopp told Sky Sports. "Two top teams ready for a massive fight -energy levels of both teams incredible."

"We were really good and dangerous," he added. "We were ready to make little passes -- there were moments we played too many long balls. Time to time we just wanted to get rid of the ball."

Guardiola said the draw was a fair result. "It was tight," he said. "In the second half we had more clear chances but a draw is a fair result.

"It is not easy to defend against Liverpool, normally they have three in attack

Mumbai's fifth or Delhi's first?

REUTERS, Undated



Delhi Capitals returned as a vastly improved side to reach their first Indian Premier League (IPL) final but will need an extraordinary effort to upset Mumbai Indians on Tuesday after three unsuccessful attempts to beat the champions

Mumbai, the tournament's most successful team, made the playoff with a match to spare and crushed Delhi in Thursday's qualifier to stay on course for a fifth IPL title.

Delhi had to overcome Sunrisers Hyderabad in Sunday's second qualifier to set up a summit clash with a side who beat them twice in the round-robin stage this season.

"Amazing, this is the best feeling ever," Delhi captain Shreyas Iyer said after Sunday's win. "This has been a rollercoaster. A lot of ups and downs,

we have stuck together like a family." Against Hyderabad, Delhi showed they have the tactical flexibility to try new combinations, opening with

Australian Marcus Stoinis and recalling Shimron Hetmyer in inspired moves that paid off richly. "You can't have same set of routines. You have to keep

chopping and changing," Iyer said. "In the next game too, we have to play freely and



maintain our temperament."

Mumbai under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma have looked familiarly formidable, their explosive batting lineup complemented by a fiery bowling attack led by India's Jasprit Bumrah.

"Having such a versatile squad, it gives me the option of changing the batting order," Rohit said after securing a place in the Dubai final.

"At times, if I want to rotate the bowlers, I can do that as well. The guys do understand their roles.

"It's not easy if you're not batting in certain positions, but we made it clear right at the start of the tournament that this is how the team is going to play and the guys are happy with that."



TWO DECADES OF TEST CRICKET

Today marks the completion of two decades since Bangladesh first took the field to play their inaugural Test match against India at the **Bangabandhu National Stadium** in 2000. Led by Naimur Rahman, Bangladesh became only the second team after Zimbabwe to post over 400 runs in their inaugural Test. Aminul Islam became Bangladesh's first Test centurion and his 145 was the second-highest by any player in a country's inaugural Test after Charles Bannerman's unbeaten 165 in 1877. However, there have been more disappointments than achievements in the Tigers' track record in the longest format. Tests: 119, Won: 14, Lost: 89, Drawn; 16 matches, Winning percentage: 11.76. PHOTO: STAR FILE

No excuses for frailties, says Zidane

REUTERS, Valencia



Madrid coach Real Zinedine Zidane said his side could not hide behind the referee's decisions or

injury and illness woes after they stumbled to a 4-1 defeat at Valencia Real conceded three penalties

for the first time in their history, all of which were scored by Valencia's Carlos Soler, while Raphael Varane also scored an own goal, after Karim Benzema had given the champions the lead.

Zidane had to make do without a total of six players for Sunday's match after midfield anchor Casemiro and record signing Eden Hazard tested positive for COVID-19, but the coach said nothing excused their performance.

"We can look for one thousand excuses and everyone can find any reason they want to explain this," Zidane said. "But we should not be looking for excuses, everyone in this squad is a Real Madrid player."

The coach criticised his side for

out Benzema's opener. "We played well in the first half

an hour but the game changed completely after they equalised. This has happened to us a number reacting so badly to Soler cancelling of times and I don't like it," he said.



Valencia forward Carlos Soler celebrates one of his three goals during an extraordinary 4-1 win over Real Madrid on Sunday. The 23-year-old missed a spot-kick before converting three more attempts to grab a rare treble of spot-kicks against Zinedine Zidane's men. PHOTO: TWITTER

"We need to really analyse what is going wrong because any little thing can cause us lots of difficulties. Once we conceded the first goal we couldn't get back into the game. A lot of things went against us today."

Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, however, felt his side were unlucky.

"We were very motivated to turn the game around at halftime but I had to make a save as soon as the second half started and then we conceded two penalties," he said.

"I think (Valencia striker) Maxi Gomez fouled Marcelo but Maxi shouted louder and they gave a penalty. There was also a foul on Asensio, we were talking about that in the dressing room but you can't change anything in the dressing room.

"I don't know how to explain it, they didn't create too many chances but we had three penalties go against us and their second goal was very bad luck."